

Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RNZRSA) ōtinga kōrero or results report

Report for:	Government Grant Expenditure Report 2024-2025	
Due date:	31 August 2025	
Grant Term:	01 July 2024 - 30 June 2025	
Deliverables:	Description	Cost
Part 1:	Support veteran wellbeing – to improve access to support veterans; in particular, to support the RNZRSA in its frontline work to develop support for veterans with PTSD and mental injury, and to help them lead a healthy and productive life.	\$250,000
Part 2:	Project: as discussed between RNZRSA and VA.	\$25,000

Report requirements / outcomes achieved

Background to the Grant
<p>Since 2016 the Government, through Veterans' Affairs New Zealand (VANZ), has provided a grant to the RNZRSA to assist the RNZRSA to support veterans and their families. The grant is in recognition of the RNZRSA Support Network which provides direct support and financial assistance to veterans in need beyond what government agencies can deliver. The RNZRSA continues to serve a unique role as a trusted and reliable organisation, working with VANZ, New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), and other Government agencies and NGOs to address issues that impact veterans. RNZRSA supports the Government's goals for veterans as a recognised vulnerable population, delivering direct support to veterans throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.</p>
Who benefited from the Grant?
<p>The Government's financial support continues to be a critical enabler of the running of the RNZRSA Support Network which delivers veteran-centred and culturally responsive support services. This network reduces the demand on the public health and social services sectors by covering gaps and/or complementing existing services as well as influencing and leading the provision of support across the sector. The grant provides a vital and tangible means of recognising the value of volunteers by providing reimbursement for travel costs. Ultimately, the annual Government grant is used to fund the activity of the RNZRSA Support Network to enable it to deliver services to veterans and their whanau across the length and breadth of the motu.</p>
What outcomes were achieved through the Grant?
<p>Despite the continuation of a challenging economic environment, forecasted training and outreach programmes for the 2024/25 financial year were delivered. The delivery schedule comprised 11 formal training sessions, conducted across New Zealand. The training equipped volunteers with the foundational knowledge to act as a Support Advisor and provide 1:1 support to veterans. Two full Case Management Clinics were conducted in Hokianga and Gisborne to further engage with more remote populations, furthering the goal of greater engagement with veterans outside of urban</p>

centres. This training focus included three Mental Health First Aid Aotearoa courses to enable increased confidence in interacting with vulnerable clients. Government support directly enables the Support Network to conduct clinics and training and provide financial recompense to our 200+ volunteers.

This year's financial support saw RNZRSA Support Services continue to evolve to meet the needs of the growing contemporary veteran population. This included continued engagement with ACC, as the majority of Scheme 2 Veterans are not eligible for VANZ support. There remains a need for advocacy for individuals facing obstacles in getting support through a variety of agencies (both NGO and Government) where system complexities create barriers to effective communication and engagement. The motto of RNZRSA Support Services is '*every Veteran's life fully lived*' and, in partnership with the Government, significant progress is being made.

The 2024/25 financial year highlighted an area of concern for the partners of former and current serving veterans with injuries, where partners needs' where generally not being prioritised doe support. Partners of ill or injured veterans are often the primary carers. The partners are also the lead advocates for veterans when engaging with health or social services agencies. The primary carer and advocate role, combined with keeping the family together, places an enormous strain on partners – particularly if they are working, which is often the case. The role of the partner in supporting their veteran spouse or partner appears to be unrecognised, leaving them left without a voice or clearly identifiable place in the support ecosystem. Partners of veterans require recognition in policy and practice as primary carers and chief advocates for the veteran. More work is needed in this space.

Looking forward

The RNZRSA continues to refocus on core purpose, which is to support veterans and their whanau. Looking ahead, RNZRSA Support Services is focused on delivery of clinics with increased engagement with Scheme 2 veterans and serving veterans. Standardised training targeted towards upskilling experienced Support Advisors on complex cases and advocacy will also be prioritised. The 200+ member volunteer workforce is the critical capability, and we need to value the time and dedication that Support Advisors put into this vitally important task. While there are digital solutions and system and process improvements that are anticipated, fundamentally the Support capability is based on people. More engagement with NZDF on transition support is anticipated, and there are opportunities where we can do more together, extending the reach of NZDF's people capability delivery functions. Building synergy with core government partner agencies is central to the RNZRSA's organisational strategy going forward.

Financial information

Future priorities remain subject to the funding required to deliver practical and tangible support to veterans. The government grant allows RNZRSA Support Services to deliver a nationally directed and locally delivered Support capability, designed to reach the veteran population throughout the length and breadth of the country. The \$250k grant augments and underpins internal sources of funding, and as a charity the government's support is pivotal to creating a sustainable and high-quality Support capability. As with many charities in the social sector, funding remains extremely challenging at present.

PART 1 – Focus on results and outcomes that make a positive change to veterans and their whanau

Description	Number
Provide a breakdown of the number of veterans supported	
Ex or current serving NZ Army	1076
Ex or current serving RNZN	136
Ex or current serving RNZAF	80
Dependents or whanau	228
Foreign Veterans	119
Ex or current serving NZ Police	7
Not recorded as either Veterans or whanau	74
Comments on those supported	
<p>The RNZRSA Support Network assisted a total of 1720 individuals. Compared to last year's report there has been a decrease in Navy, Airforce and NZ Police veterans supported and a corresponding increase in NZ Army and foreign veterans supported.</p>	
Provide a breakdown of the type of support provided	
Advocacy (includes referrals to and from agencies, form filling, agency liaison on behalf of the client, grant applications, and advice)	810
Welfare check/ visit (includes calls and physical visits to check on health or welfare situation, transport to and from home, medical and goods pick up and drop off, and social health support)	910
<p>While much of our work is as a navigator service, supporting our people to interact with agency systems and processes, there has been a reverse from last year's report where more direct client interaction has taken place. This is possibly due to the increased vulnerability of our oldest veteran populations due to age and increased interactions with younger veterans and their families by the Support network, potentially due to the challenging economic climate currently experienced.</p>	
Show the percentage of each type of support requested	
Advocacy (includes referrals to and from agencies, form filling, agency liaison on behalf of the client, grant applications, and advice)	47%
Welfare check/ visit (includes calls and physical visits to check on health or welfare situation, transport to and from home, medical and goods pick up and drop off, and social health support)	53%

The direct client interactions tend to be driven by the Local Support Advisor (LSA) within a community, and the increase is probably a reflection of the increase in training experienced by LSAs. With training comes increased confidence in the ability to interact and support vulnerable populations.

Provide a breakdown of the number of referrals received

Proactive interactions by RNZRSA Support Services by individual Support Advisors, through the Support Network or via a Support Clinic	890
Referred from the RNZRSA outside of Support Services	398
Self-referrals to support services either locally or at District level	283
Friends or whanau	63
Referred through VANZ	13
Other government agencies	24
NZDF via Camp or Base presence	21
Other NGOs	28

Is anyone better off?

How many veterans received more support	1720
How many veterans became more independent	

Provide stories or commentary from veterans

Case study 1

A non-qualifying veteran was referred to RNZRSA Support Services for social health support. They were in a stable situation but needed connection with the veteran community to help support their mental health needs. RNZRSA Support Services referred them onto a VSO provider that could assist them. Subsequently the partner of the veteran required support as a result of the effect of the veteran's condition on them. They were not entitled to any support via the established government systems so, after an assessment by RNZRSA Support Services, another VSO provider was engaged to help the partner's mental health needs. This resulted in better outcomes for the veteran and partner in being able to deal with the veteran's ongoing wellbeing needs and the partner's mental health and resilience.

Case study 2

The family of a veteran were struggling with the cost of living and had a child who suffers from a debilitating condition. As primary carers, this limited the parent's ability to do full-time work, added to cost pressures, and reduced income. Digital devices improved the child's quality of life and needed replacing but this was out of reach for the family due to cost. RNZRSA Support Services immediately supported them through a local RSA poppy fund. Hardship relief and funding was provided to the family. The National Poppy Trust was also approached and paid

for the devices to be replaced. With the new devices the child has been able to maintain social connections. This in turn has reduced the financial burden on the family.

Provide feedback from veterans, whanau and other stakeholders

“Thank you so much for the work you have put into this. Regardless of outcome, it means a lot” Email September 2024

“I don't know if you'll ever know just how much of an impact this has had on our lives, and the impact it will have on our lives going forward. It has been an unrelenting journey that has taken it's toll and for the first time in a very long time, I feel seen.” Email October 2024

“Once again, a massive thank you...for the help with (redacted) treatment costs and connectivity. I might be a little melodramatic saying this, but it's pretty much been a lifesaver...” Email (abridged) January 2025

“Thank you so much. The weight off my shoulders is amazing.” Email May 2025

RNZRSA Support Network activity

Hours of engagement that Support Advisor volunteers were performing their role

Individual interactions with clients on support matters	2326 hrs
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Most of the interactions were for the purposes of application filling for conditions or VIP services, and general client visits to check up on clients’ needs or situations but also includes all other client related activity such as taking a client to attend an appointment, delivery of goods or medicines, making enquiries or advocating on behalf of the client. All interactions allowed for a continuation of support to the clients or in linking them to a health provider or support agency to manage or support their individual needs.

Group related events with stakeholder organisations	137 Hrs
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Mainly NZDF wellness expo attendance and stakeholder workshops and forums as a formal representative of the RSA Support Services at an organised event. These events are an important means of creating connection, identifying needs, and working alongside other VSOs. Attendance also raises the profile of the RNZRSA, destigmatises the negative impacts of service, and provides opportunities to connect with local communities.

Meetings: physical or online	431 hrs
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This includes RSA Hub management meetings with NZDF command and strategy and alignment meetings with other veteran support organisations and government agencies. These are physical or teleconference/ video linked meetings between organisations’ representatives related to Support Services activities. For example, establishing protocols between local ACC representatives and the Support Advisors to better facilitate support for RSA clients. These stakeholder interactions impact directly on the delivery of support to ex and current serving veterans and their families, usually by establishing a working relationship or MOU with the agencies involved to better facilitate physical, mental and social health, or better financial outcomes.

Training: includes presentations to organisations, groups and individuals	139 hrs
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<p>The majority of the training was directed internally to the training of Support Advisors, the fundamental building block of the Support capability. This includes induction training of new Support Advisors and training of aspirant Support Advisors. Training includes attendance at workshops and courses that enhance the knowledge and delivery of support services. The government grant also supports training in mental health awareness, which is a stated objective of the grant.</p>	
Other activities not quantified in other criteria	1174 hrs
<p>The hours of this are mainly in administrative matters linked to support – emails, report writing, correspondence and messaging (internally and externally) and transport to locations to assist and support veterans and includes internal organisational representation as a support Advisor.</p>	
Total reported:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer hours for delivery of support 	4207 hrs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of working days (8 hour working day) 	526 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance travelled for above activities 	72,315 kms
Case management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total recorded national office ongoing case management for the year 	28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many new cases 	18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many hours spent on ongoing and new cases 	760
<p>RNZRSA Advocacy only has two ongoing files from 2022 now, with most advocacy cases having had an outcome. RNZRSA Advocacy is defined as support cases beyond the capabilities of Local Support Advisors. Advocacy cases typically involve veterans in dispute with VANZ or ACC, where a review or appeal is required due to disagreement on the determination of circumstances of the veteran's eligibility to financial support or benefits. This requires face to face interviewing, follow up conversations, research into legislation and medical conditions, specialist interviews and correspondence, and then a review meeting or attendance at an appeal panel. Advocacy is complex and time consuming.</p>	
Skills building	
Support Advisor courses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many Support Advisor induction courses were run 	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people trained as Support Advisors 	38
<p>All registered RSA Support Advisors who complete the pre-requisite requirements are eligible to attend the Induction Course which is a practical course designed to increase overall skill levels of RSA Support Advisors. The 2024-2025 year had a large increase in new Support</p>	

Advisors needing to complete the Induction Courses, course as more ex-service and younger RSA members volunteered to be Support Advisors.	
Case Management Clinics	
• How many clinics were run?	2
• Where were they run?	See below
• How many veterans attended?	25
After the large clinic push the previous year, two clinics were run in the more remote locations of Hokianga and Gisborne respectively. Most attendees were Scheme 1 veterans (22) with 1 Scheme 2 veteran, and a widow.	
Mental Health Courses	
• How many mental health courses were run?	3
• Where were they run?	Auckland Wellington Christchurch
• How many attended	46
The courses were run by PracticeSafe, a new provider, and the presenter was a veteran herself, which helped to provide context to the training. The training was the accredited Mental Health First Aid Aotearoa course, which is a two-day programme. Feedback from participants was overwhelming positive, giving confidence to Support Advisors to be able to intervene and assist veterans experiencing mental health and addiction challenges.	
Meetings	
Veterans Advisory Board (VAB)	
• How many meetings attended?	0
The RNZRSA doesn't have an official presence on the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) to advocate for veteran interests. The CE and GMSS attend VAB meeting at the invitation of the chair.	
Veterans Reference Group (VRG)	
• How many meetings attended?	0
This group hasn't met formally, noting it was an outcome of Te Arataki. RNZRSA does have a rep on the VA Service Review Panel.	
Veteran Support Organisation (VSO) Coordination	
• How many attended?	0

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where were they held and what were the topics? 	N/A
<p>The RNZRSA hasn't held a formal VSO meeting since the one held in Palmerston North in June 2023. We maintain an open line of communication with VSOs, many of whom are affiliated to the RNZRSA.</p>	

PART 2 – Focus on results and outcomes that make a positive change to veterans and their whanau

Project goal: To improve the quality of completed applications submitted to VA.

RNZRSA Support Advisors assist veterans and their whanau to fill out application forms when seeking various forms of assistance from Veterans' Affairs. When this is not done effectively, there are avoidable delays in processing claims. The project aims to:

- Improve understanding of RNZRSA Support Advisors as to what constitutes a comprehensive application.
- Improve the understanding of veterans and whanau about what is required and how the necessary information needs to be obtained and presented for decisions on entitlements to be made.
- Reduce avoidable delays caused by inadequate or incomplete applications.

Project status

Ongoing. After the initial seven training courses in FY24/25, and the DSM Hui in March 2025, the Support Advisor Induction Course has emphasised the accuracy and presentation of information, particularly in the VA56 form. There has also been further communication to the veteran community to seek support through the DSMs who can then assign trained Support Advisors to assist. Untrained advocates who may be unfamiliar with Scheme 2 veterans' support needs could be the source of lower quality applications.

Project highlights

- Reaffirmation of Support Advisor Induction Course principles, particularly in terms of accuracy of information and linking conditions to QOS.
- Updated Book 1 to highlight those principles.
- Quality control measures for Support Advisors.
- Delivery of training to increasingly better qualified and suitable Support Advisors.
- Future proofing by investing in Project Sentinel (digital membership management system) which will have the potential to link directly with VA's case management system in future.

Identified project risks and mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of volunteers due to higher expectations Lack of oversight Variable ability of volunteers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted training and recruitment Responsibility tier system for volunteers (VSW, LSA, DSA, DSM) Iterative development

Next steps FY25/26

Continued development of the solution and rollout to the organisation.
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